



The Commission on
INDEPENDENT
Colleges & Universities
in New York

**Testimony of the
Commission on Independent
Colleges and Universities**

Before the Joint Legislative
Budget Hearing on Higher Education

February 7, 2022

Good afternoon, Chairs Krueger and Weinstein and members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees. My name is Lola Brabham, and it is my privilege to serve as the president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to comment on Governor Hochul's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2023.

The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) educates 40 percent of the state's 1.2 million students, including approximately 250,000 New Yorkers.

By bolstering student aid and increasing support for proven programs, New York State can ensure access to quality higher education for all students, including those from historically marginalized communities and those disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The future of our state is in the hands of the students on Independent Sector campuses today. The nearly 500,000 students who attend private colleges in New York include 58 percent of New York's future teachers, 67 percent of future nurses and other workers who will help address the state's healthcare crisis, and 67 percent of STEM graduates.

These students need New York's help to achieve their full potential. On behalf of our member colleges and their students, we urge the Legislature to adopt policies that ensure the success of all students.

Expand TAP: Do More to Help Students

New York's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) has been changing students' lives for more than 50 years. Last year, this body made an important investment in the program by increasing the maximum award.

There is more work to be done to support students from middle-class families. Expanding TAP for part-time students, as the Executive Budget proposes, is a good step. **Increasing the income eligibility limit for TAP to \$110,000 (from \$80,000)** will expand the program to 24,000 additional New York families. The income limit for TAP eligibility has not been raised since 2000, failing to keep pace with family income levels or the needs of working families. The result is that every year fewer students are eligible for the program.

The minimum TAP award has also been stagnant for more than two decades. **Increasing the minimum award to \$1,000 (from \$500)** will help working families and students across New York.

In addition, we applaud the Executive's proposal to **reopen TAP funding to incarcerated individuals** and urge the Legislature to support this initiative. Providing TAP to incarcerated students will ensure that the formerly incarcerated acquire skills to give back to their communities and provide them with expanded post-release opportunities. Importantly, this proposal will not take TAP dollars away from any other students.

The federal government restored access to Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals last year — and it is time for New York to follow suit.

Invest in Students through Bundy Aid

Bundy Aid is another critical source of student aid New York provides for students enrolled at Independent Sector colleges and universities. In fact, it is the only source of unrestricted support private colleges receive from the state. Bundy Aid is outcome-based and student-focused — colleges receive funding based on the number of students who graduate, and the funding is invested back into student aid and programs that help more students complete their degrees.

Bundy Aid has been dramatically underfunded for decades – currently it is funded at just 18 percent of statutory levels, or approximately \$35 million.

We are grateful that the Executive Budget included level funding for Bundy Aid. On behalf of New York’s private colleges, I ask the Legislature to **increase Bundy Aid funding to \$60 million**. An investment in New York’s private colleges is an investment in New York’s future.

The Legislature should also reject the Executive Budget’s proposal to make Bundy Aid funding contingent on colleges filing faculty diversity plans with SED. Tying a critical objective like increasing faculty diversity to a source of student aid, Bundy Aid, is not the right approach. Faculty diversity initiatives must be treated seriously, and independently.

Support Efforts to Increase Faculty Diversity

Despite best efforts, colleges and universities have struggled to increase the number of faculty members from underrepresented communities on their campuses. CICU proposes **establishing the Charles L. Reason Fellowship Program** to support undergraduate students with financial need, who have demonstrated strong academic potential to succeed in doctoral studies, and who are interested in pursuing a career in academia. The program is modeled after the nationally successful Mellon Mays Fellowship and McNair Scholars programs, and would provide financial support, academic advising, mentorship, and research opportunities. Students who go on to pursue doctoral degrees would be eligible for loan forgiveness.

Support Opportunity Programs

In partnership with the State, opportunity programs including HEOP, STEP and CSTEP, and the Liberty Partnerships Program provide college access to students from economically and educationally disadvantaged communities, including those most gravely impacted by the pandemic.

We are grateful that the Executive Budget includes a 10 percent funding increase for all opportunity programs. But without adequate funding, these programs will be unable to continue to serve their students. Some colleges have already ended their opportunity programs citing lack of funding. To preserve these life-changing programs, the Legislature should increase funding by 20 percent, and allow additional funds to be used to increase per-student funding. This will ensure existing programs have the resources they need to serve their students

Partner for Stronger Campuses and Communities

Investing in higher education has the power to strengthen communities and strengthen the state's economy.

For example, investing in the Higher Education Capital (HECap) Matching Grant Program has created more than \$1.3 billion in infrastructure spending across the state. The Executive Budget proposes a new \$30 million round of this competitive grant — and because of the 3 to 1 match requirement, the state will see more than \$120 million in total investment as a result. These funds go toward construction and infrastructure projects that have created more than 17,000 jobs across the state since the program's inception.

CICU proposes that the State partner with colleges to achieve the important climate goals outlined in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) by establishing a **\$100 million Green HECap program** focused on carbon reduction and sustainability. This would spur green investment in higher education infrastructure across the state.

New York is already a leader in R&D, and we can build on that success by investing \$10 million in the Matching Grants program run by NYSTAR, which will help New York's colleges access newly available federal R&D funding. Many federal grants require a

guarantee of state funding to complement the federal dollars. Investing in the Matching Grants program will create a funding source any college in the state can access to support applications for federal research funding.

Centers for Advanced Technology (CATs) and Centers of Excellence (CoEs) have proven track records of incubating technology and creating jobs and opportunities across the state. But they have suffered from years of flat, or reduced, funding. **This year, we encourage the state to increase funding for each CAT and CoE to \$1.5 million.**

The Executive Budget proposes approximately \$350 Million for important investments in the state's Workforce Development programs, with a set aside of \$25 million for internship and apprenticeship programs that would be limited to only SUNY and CUNY students. Leaving the other 40 percent of New York's college students out of workforce development efforts is a mistake and will undercut the program's ability to serve as a streamlined channel for bringing on the best and brightest new workers. We urge the Legislature to ensure all college students are included in these important efforts.

Finally, New York's private colleges are well-positioned to help the state address the current crisis in nursing staffing. Private colleges award 58 percent of all nursing degrees in the state every year but providing adequate clinical training to these students is a bottleneck. We propose passing legislation to establish a **Nursing Preceptor Tax Credit** to incentivize healthcare workers to take on educational roles and to also **permit colleges to use more simulation-based clinical training**. These steps will ensure students in healthcare fields have access to the clinical education they need to earn degrees and join our state's healthcare workforce.

Why Invest in Independent Sector Students

Two-thirds of students at CICU member colleges are from families that earn less than \$125,000 annually. Nearly 60,000 Independent Sector students receive TAP, and the majority of TAP recipients have family incomes under \$20,000 annually.

Colleges, and their students, are still reeling from the pandemic. COVID-19 cost New York's private, not-for-profit colleges and universities more than \$3.9 billion as of June 2021 — a total that has continued to grow during the current academic year. Federal relief aid covered less than 22 percent of those losses.

Independent Sector students are New Yorkers. They are our state's future entrepreneurs, healthcare workers, and educators. They deserve the state's support while they pursue their degrees and prepare to embark on their careers. By investing in college students, New York can ensure more students succeed in their pursuit of higher education and are prepared to head the call of service in response to the states, and societies, most pressing and complex issues.

This is the year to make a historic investment in higher education in New York. The Governor has proposed a \$1.5 billion investment in operating support and an additional \$690 million in capital investment for SUNY and CUNY. The Governor was clear in her budget presentation that the State is on solid financial ground and noted that no budget gaps are projected through 2027. Now is the time to invest in a higher education ecosystem that supports all sectors. The State must increase its support of the 500,000 students that comprise the Independent Sector, to the benefit of the great State of New York.